### JOSEPH MEEHAN

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### THE ADVENTURERS

(Continued from Page 2.)

world, and it puzzled me that he should have taken this whim. Perhaps it was for one night at least, and, thanks to not fancy! Suddenly Mrs. Main's Montgomery's quick ears, it would be statement, which I had doubted and strange if we did not manage to put ridiculed, returned to my mind in a | another face on the position by the flow of memory.

I lay down upon the bed and rested "There's nothing to be heard," said I. "Wait," said Montgomery eagerly. A silence ensued. "Don't you hear

anything?" he asked. I shook my head. "My dear boy, it was fancy," I said and was raising my head from the pillow when suddenly a

slight sound struck upon my ears, and I paused in the act and in the center of my speech. "I hear something now," I said. "But it's only the patter of Montgomery set his ear to the wall.

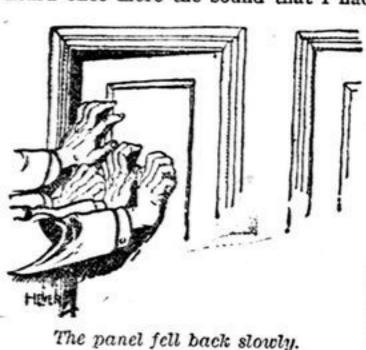
"That's not rain," he whispered. He was right; it was not rain; it was the noise of feet falling lightly upon stone. At once I took fire.

"What is behind this oak?" I asked. "There must be some passage here." sounded with my knuckles on the board. "It's hollow."

A careful inspection with the candle revealed a seam in the oak, which might mark the site of hinges, and together we pushed firmly on the panel. It fell back slowly, being, as I found afterward, without lock or spring and merely held in its place by disuse and dirt. Within, the light shone upon a black hole and a dark flight of stairs leading downward. "We must see the end of this," said

Montgomery, and hopped into the darkness like a frog. I followed. Below there was now silence; the footsteps had died away. The narrow flight in the wall continued for some thirty steps and brought us, as I reckoned, to the foundations of the castle. Here we were fetched up promptly by blank wall of wood-no doubt a similar encasement of oak as that in which the panel above was set. Groping about, we fumbled upon a latch and opened the door quietly. The candle flared on the walls opposite. We were in the dark corridor leading to the treasure.

As this discovery flashed on me I heard once more the sound that I had



detected in Montgomery's room-the sound of delicate footfalls on the stone flags. Blowing out the candle and putting a detaining hand on Montgomery, I drew back into the niche of that secret place. The sounds drew nearer. dropping regularly on the air and echoing faintly in the long tunnel. And then a figure, wrapped in darkness, but palpable to every sense save that of the sight, emerged, passed and faded before us. The footsteps pattered away into the distance.

I waited a few moments, and then, stooping, shook off my boots, bidding my companion do the same. That done, we stepped out into the corridor and plunged into the blackness of the

The blood in my body ran like a mill race, but left my brain clear and bright in eddies. I was not blind to the probabilities of this adventure, which had now stepped out of the supernatural and become merely human and prosaic.

- Here was one of our determined foes perambulating within the precincts of our hold, and even admitted to that privy place near which the hoard of treasure lay. Slowly and with great caution we followed. Our naked feet made no sound, but it was difficult to grope one's way in the darkness. Our direction lay round the castle walls and toward the drum towers, and it was upon the flight of stairs mounting to the guardroom in the northern tower that we came presently. The door at the top of this staircase stood ajar, and, proceeding with still greater care, we climbed up and looked through the chinks.

A lantern, newly lit and shedding a dull glow through the opaque glasses, was set upon the floor and cast the long, black shadow of a man against the wall. He was standing near the short, deep embrasure that yawned in the massive stone walls of the drum tower, scrutinizing the valley below. What could he be there for? As I wondered, turning over the circumstances in my excited mind, he stooped, and, picking up the lantern, thrust it into the window, waving it from side to side. I suppose this was in response to some signal from the valley, but I paid little heed to it at the time, being suddenly interested in a recognition. It was Hood!

I will confess that the identification of that unmistakable lean body and black head filled me with a sudden disquietude of which it would have been hard to give the reason. The very silence of the man sowed fear and mistrust in my heart. And so it was that instead of breaking from our hiding place and seizing the impudent intruder I put a hand on Montgomery and constrained him to retire with me into the lower passages. We concealed ourselves in one of the side galleries | to be eating something" he said quiet-

and there awaited Hood's return, for that he would return I had no doubt. Evidently he and Sercombe communicated with each other by means of flashing lights, and it was equally evident that Sercombe's signal must have been to postpone action. I could see pretty plainly the method Hood intended to adopt. He was to admit the marauders to the castle by lowering the drawbridge and raising the portcullis, after which they would have the three of us at their mercy. But the presence of the police in the neighborhood had saved us from that fate

Montgomery's room stood upon the I was right in my conjecture, for back of the castle and, like all the shortly afterward we heard the rerooms which were in use, faced the turning feet sound along the stones. park. It was a small, square cham- He passed the end of our passage, ber, lined, as had been practiced holding his lantern before him, and throughout the castle, with oak. Mont- when he had disappeared we hurried gomery pointed to the pillow. "My out into the corridor and sped after head was there," he explained. "Lis- him. Once we saw the spot of light that glowed in the vicinity of that shadow pause and waver. I dare say that some sound had caught his ear, and he turned and listened. We shrank into the protection of the wall until the footsteps had resumed their way. By this time I had guessed his errand. or at least his destination. He was bound for the treasure chamber in the keep and had probably come from there previously. Possibly it had been his hiding place. Here again my assumption proved correct, and we watched him open the cupboard in the wall and vanish like an expert, lantern and all, into the abyss.

"We must take him tonight," said I to Montgomery. "It won't do to let him get out of range."

Montgomery nodded and, cautiously approaching, pulled open the door in the wall. Drawing himself up, he clambered through the space and slid down into the farther room, making wonderfully small noise for so huge a body. I followed. But Hood was not in the lower room-at least there was no light to pierce the utter darknessand, moreover, I think we both knew that he was in the loft above us. Together we crawled up the steps and once more looked in through the friendly aperture of a door upon the chief of our bitter enemies. Hood, kneeling upon the floor, was bent over the chests which contained the treasure.

Suddenly he started and lifted his head. It may have been that the door creaked, or perhaps he caught the sound of our breathing. All I know is that the next moment, and just as Montgomery leaped forward at a stride upon him, he put out his arm and with a swift movement overturned the lantern. The room was at once plunged

in darkness, darkness so thick and gravelike that it was incredible. Eternal night dwelt and brooded in those rayless dungeons, and she resumed her empire greedily from that meek, usurping candle. Montgomery's rush carried him to the corner where the boxes lay. but he encountered no one. Hood by some slippery movement had glided away, and where he was in the solid darkness neither of us could say. gathered this from the silence that ensued upon Montgomery's spring. heard him pick himself up, and then there was a hush. I stood with my back against the door in a state of intense suspense. There came a slight soft sound, and a dagger whizzed past me and struck in the oak with a loud tang. I sprang forward, but my fist took the air. Montgomery, from his corner, made

a rush toward me, and I heard another of those horrid "tangs" and an exclamation of pain. Then there fell silence again, and presently an invisible person seemed to pass before me. I thrust out my arms, and again a soft and slender form touched me gently, and there came the clang and clatter of a knife upon the wall, pinning my coat sleeve to the woodwork; but upon that there bore down upon us the sprawling form of Montgomery, and two people were fighting upon the floor before me. Tap, tap, tap went the horrid knife upon the floor, and then silence again, broken only by heavy noises in the throat. With formidable fears in my breast, I struck a match, casting a thread of light upon the scene of the struggle. Hood lay in Montgomery's arms, crumpled like a snake whose back is broken, one hand (which held a knife) stretched inert along the floor, his head thrown back, his face white through its sallow discoloration, and his eyelids lowered over his strange

"Good heavens, you have killed him!" Montgomery looked doubtful. "I don't think so," he panted; "but he was the

very devil to tackle with that knife of I may have squeezed too hard. Something did crack, but"--I pulled him aside. "Light the lan-

tern, old chap," I said. Hood fell loosely to the floor as Mont-



HEYERT . Hood was bent over the chests. his eyes, which fell on me sharp and ardent, burning with a violent light.

He sat up. "You have me, sir," he remarked. "Yes, my man," said I cheerfully, "I think we may go so far as to say that." Hood turned on his side, and I kicked the dagger out of his reach.

"If you don't mind, sir, I should like

ly. "I've had nothing all day." He looked toward the treasure chests. and I perceived upon one of these the preparations for a meal. I laughed. "You know the house well, I see,

"Yes, sir," said he. "I've done "Very well, Have your meal,"

greed. "Any bones broken?" "Thank you, sir! none, sir. stiff, sir; that's all." "Then I think we'll leave you to you

supper, Hood," I said. I examined the candle in the lantern; it would las some hours. Ere it burned out I would revisit the prisoner with some sur

"You are not going to keep him here ?" asked Montgomery in some sur

I nodded. "For the present." We passed out, and I turned the key

"He'll stifle in there," expostulated Montgomery. "Oh, dear, no!" said I. "It's not the

first time the keep has been used as a

dungeon, though I dare say it will be

the last." I think the boy took a grewsome fear of me on that occasion, regarding me with horror as a malevolent and barbarous tyrant, but in truth I had a purpose in my seeming malice, as will ap-

CHAPTER XIV. E YE had now a prisoner of war. lawfully taken in the flagrant act, and must consider what to do with him. For myself, I had already solved the riddle in my own way. To say the truth, I was getting a distaste for the adventure. It implied too many hard knocks, oo rough a usage for a summer holiday, and, what was much worse, it entailed on me a grave responsibility.

these lawless events was wholly in the direction of murder. The word was ugly enough, but it must be faced. Murder is what the law would call it. and murder was what it came near leing at the best. The capture of Hood, then, opened a road of escape, and I had already resolved to employ it. Of course it would have been possible still to have surrendered the treasure to the crown or to have handed it into the possession of Sercombe's party; but, though I was reluctant to continue the bloody struggle, I was certainly indisposed to haul down my flag. If it were to be peace, it should be peace with honor. And the body of Hood gave me my means.

I was able after some argument to carry my point with the others. They had both a kindly fancy for the fighting and were inclined to take my announcement in a chapfallen manner. But I explained that I was making no decision of myself; that I was one of ed us cheerily and, mopping his red three and that I had merely offered the suggestion as my contribution to invited us to drink with him. the counsels of war. Upon that I addprepared in favor of my advice, and toes. Ecuador was nothing to this." the end of the talk was that they accepted the plans I unfolded.

must pay a visit to the prisoner, who draft, by the time we had arrived at a conclusion had lain in the blackness of that abominable dungeon for five hours. Sheppard, indeed, had been eager to interview him, and upon hearing of the capture had at once betaken himself to the keep. He was absent haif an hour, but I did not inquire what he had been doing. I merely looked at him interrogatively when he returned, which he did wearing a graver face than was usual to him. Noting the

"That man is dangerous," he said-"abnormally dangerous."

"Montgomery and I have occasion to know that," I replied. "He is a snakethat is the substantive -- and I doubt very much whether we can kill him." "I have my doubts whether we can even scotch him," said Sheppard dryly

and then dismissed the subject. Yet my conversation with Hood later was very commonplace and marked by no particular points. He kept his customary face of obsequiousness and gave me the briefest replies to my interrogations. I was specially exercised in my mind as to the manner of his entrance into the castle. For all his dexterity and cunning, I could not see how, carefully watched as our fortress was, he had managed to gain admittance over the drawbridge and through the closed portcullis. At the question, which was delivered point blank, he turned his luminous eyes upon me and regarded me with a shifty smile, the shadow of a smile, betokening no on his head.

have been a gentleman, sir, throughout, will call on you to observe that I am and I should be proud to have served not responsible for Mr. Hood's moveyou. I came with the party in the ments."

morning, sir."

ing with my poor master so long. And can do without it."

I opened my eyes. The man's plans many a dirty attorney." were conceived with excellent craft. It would be the last thing I should have I. thought of, and yet it was so simple to take advantage of the confusion and secrete himself upon the battlements after his allies had fled.

"You are a rascal, Hood," I returned, not without admiration. "But you are a clever rascal."

"Thank you, sir," said Hood, "Yes," I continued, "you have had a smart shot for it, but your game is up, my man. Clever as you are, I have you caged, and I think Captain Sercombe and his scoundrels are further from the gold than ever."

"It looks like it, sir," admitted Hood. I looked round upon the dark and grimy walls. "This is a mean hole for a man of your parts to lie testering I said, "but I see no choice before you. You have made your own bed, and you must lie in it. A man might rot here and drop into the bones of a skeleton without sound or sense of the outside world. The bodies of many captives have decayed within these gloomy

"Have they, indeed, sir?" said Head politely. He sat upon one of the oaken cases, his eyes bent upon me earnestly, his body almost conchant for a spring. I could have believed the man was pre paring a sudden assault upon me but that I knew he carried no weapon and I was of stronger and bigger build than he. But apparently nothing of the sort was in his mind. It was merely the deference due to my position which he proclaimed in that attention. That mask of the trained servant concealed his individuality now as ever. Never once had I seen the veil lifted and the real man exposed and naked to the light of day.

"Hood," said I, almost with a sigh of despair at his imperturbable calm, "do you want to stay here indefinitely?" "Certainly not, sir; by your leave, sir," he answered promptly.

"Then upon what terms shall I offer you release?" His eyes dropped, and there was silence. "Remember," said I, "that no one outside ourselves is aware of your existence here. You may be hidden here till the day of judgment and none be the wiser, and even then your bones will scarcely see the light of day. What do you pro-

Hood shifted his gaze to my face. "Anything that's convenient to you, sir. I'd rather leave it to you, sir." I experienced a strange impulse to cry out with some emotion, but wheth-

er it was a combination of all three. I could not have said. I rose from my seat, controlling my voice with diffi-It seemed to me that the drift of "Very well, Hood," I said. "It shall

be left to me, as you suggest." And with that I stalked out of the dungeon and locked the door.

It was impossible to transact business with such a man. I felt the need of reciprocity, whereas dealing with Hood reminded me of nothing so much as of digging at a piece of rubber that will fly gently back when the pressure is removed. And so it must be with Sercombe that I should arrange the details of a compromise, or at least the terms of a truce if not of a permanent

Sercombe was absent from the inn but I learned that he was in Raymond and, taking our horses, Montgomery and I rode across to the little town in the early hours of the afternoon. We ran upon the captain himself in High street and as we were making for the Swan to put up our nags. He welcomforehead (for the day was very sultry),

"Just stepping across to the Swan," ed the very cogent reasons which I had said he. "Come along and put up your I accepted with a nod, and presently

we were seated in the commercial To execute my scheme it was neces- room by the window that looked out sary to see Sercombe. But first I upon the courtyard, sipping a cooling "I prefer," says the captain hospita-

bly, "to drink in company rather than alone. And that's the distinction between a drinker and a drunkard, Master Montgomery. Take it from me." With which he threw back his head and took a long pull at his glass. "I have not felt so warm since I was in

Abyssinia," he remarked. "Ah," said I, "you are right, captain. Hot is the word. I'm sure from my heart I envy Hood."

inquiry in my glance, he shook his Sercombe pricked up his ears, regarding me inquisitively.

"Yes," I went on, leaning back in my chair; "cool, damp floors, cold stone walls and neither the sun nor the moon to smite him-that's my notion of comfort this weather."

Sercombe paused in the act of drinking and put down his glass. "What is this conundrum, Mr. Greatorex?" he asked in a puzzled way. "'Tis no conundrum." I replied airi-

ly. "By the way, where did you say your friend Hood was?" He looked at me under his red eyebrows. "Mr. Hood," he said, "is on business of his own. He is a gentle-

man at large, but he has affairs." "No doubt, no doubt," I remarked amiably. "This is an excellent cooling drink, captain." Sercombe puffed at his cigar, con-

tinuing to study our faces. Upon Montgomery's, I dare say, he perceived a smile of triumph, for he suddenly put dewn his cigar and folded his hands

"I fancy we've got to come to an "I don't mind telling you, sir." he understanding, Mr. Greatorex," he said murmured, "though it's not what I slowly. "I'm slow of wit, no doubt, would say to most gentlemen. But you but I begin to see daylight. But I

"I have never imagined so," I an-"What!" said I. "You were with the swered. "On the contrary." A frown, rather than a scowl, cross-

"Yes, sir. Seeing you engaged, I ed his face. "Has it ever fallen to crept away. I know the house, sir, be- you, Mr. Greatorex, to be tied in a leash; to be- But I reckon as a bar-I don't hold with violence where you rister you are not particular about your cases. You have messed up with "You felicitate me too much," said

with a bow. "I am unfortunate enough never to have had a brief." "Ah!" said the captain and was for a moment silent. "You have Hood?" he asked.

The man's intelligence was quick; his wits were plying even more quickly. "We have the honor to possess a

prisoner of war," said I. "I congratulate you, sir," said he, "upon an event I had always anticipated." Then again be was quiet, seeming absorbed in thought, but suddenly he sat up. "See here, Mr. Greatorex," he said, "I will be frank with you. This thing has not gone according to my notions, and that's flat. As for this folly of expleiting the castle

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e of galloping consumption." The speaker was Mr. A. E. Mumford, six teet tall, and looking just what he is a husky healthy farmer. He works his own farm near Magnetawan, Ont. "I caught my cold working as a fireman

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mere sense of the ridiculous, or wheth. the outset. A fair siege and a square siege is more to my taste. But you let up on us with that moat of yours and those sharp eyes. I will confess I never saw a position held more keenly. But that's no use to us, and I tell you that I'm sick of it. Look; I'll tell you how I stand. I have my men -they're mine, mind you, and not Hood's-and I've no stomach to give it all up for nothing. But, between you and me, it's no champagne supper to defend the castle and lose half your natural life in blows and strategies; therefore, what do you say to terms?" "Terms!" I echoed. "To ransom Hood?"

> He ejaculated an oath. "Let the beast rot," he declared. "I'm talking of ourselves.'

"Captain Sercombe." said I gently. "I knew Mr. Hood in this business ere I knew you, and to my idea he was the prime mover in the conspiracy. Let us say that he is gone, and what have

Sercombe looked extremely blank, and I could see that my words had struck a vital spot. "Hood," he said, "has done nothing

but blunder, and besides"-But he got no further, breaking off suddenly and as though with an ef-

"If that be so," said I, rising, "let us see how Captain Sercombe will manage matters." "Hold hard." he interrupted. "Sit down awhile, sir. You have sprung

this affair on me. I must take my counsel. Come, what do you say to going shares?" I lifted my brows. "You are not serious?" I remarked.

He glanced furtively at Montgomery. "I will take one-third," he said, "and no questions asked."

"My dear sir," said I in amazement, "you embarrass me. Your terms are too liberal from a vanquished foe. could not accept such generosity. And now, if you will allow me, as I have an appointment with Mr. Hood shortly, I must"-

But this alarmed him, as I could perceive, for he changed color and put out a finger to catch my arm. "I will stand in with all of you!" he

I smiled, but before I could reply an interruption fell in the entrance of the police sergeant, Jones, whom we had met before. He saluted us, and I made an inquiry as to his investigations.

"I am on a track, sir," he declared.

"I can say no more." And he eyed Sercombe attentively. "You've not struck those gypsies, I hear," said Sercombe, who had resumed his cigar with an appearance of

"No. sir." "They're here today and somewhere else tomorrow. I hardly expected you would find them. They nose a scent pretty soon."

nonchalance.

"I'm on a track, sir," repeated Jones, "Glad to hear it," nodded the cap-I went out with the sergeant, out

Sercombe called to me. "What is it?" I asked, standing in the doorway.

An anxious look troubled Sercombe's eye. "I have made you a proposition, Mr. Greatorex.'

"That's true," said I gravely, "and I will ask you, captain, to better it. But, excuse me, my time is limited." "You give me short shrift," exclaimed he, with a bitter laugh. "Oh, no," I said; "but I dare say you

will have time to think over it between now and 9 o'clock. If you can see your way to a more equitable adjustment, captain, perhaps you would be good enough to let me know by then?" At that I left him and caught up with Montgomery, who had gone ahead with

"Excuse me, sir," said Jones politely, "but are you a very old friend of Captain Sercombe's?" "Why, no," said I, "I have not known

nim long." "Ah," said he, "an odd gentleman sir. Mr. Hood of the Woodman, he

knows some queer stories about him." "He says so, does he?" said I. Jones emphatically wagged his head. "Very queer," he added. From which it appeared to me that Mr. Jones might

(Continued next week.)

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Date when Nam Received 1906.	e Municipality	Nature Licenses
February 18th George Sim March 6th James R. Shar		Sho
March 14th Albert		
January 18th . Mason Saun		44
March 6th James Good		Taver
March 6th William		1517.61
March 9 Thomas McCor		
March 15th Richard Bu	itler "	23
March 20th George M	oore "	
March 20th William Simp	oson "	47
March 23rd John Mau	nder "	**
March 23rd King & Gat		1.9
March 19th Michael J. McGo		Taver
March 16th Duncan J. McC	Crae "	
March 13th Hector Camp		
March 16th Andrew G		**
March 16th John McNa		**
March 20th Duncan Mathie		4.4
darch 22nd G. A. McKing e above held licenses during		50

Simpson, Albert Duck and Mason Saunders, who are applicants for shop licenses in the town of Lindsay.

WILLIAM THORNBURY. License Inspector,

## Is that you Charlie?

You want me to go for a drive? am afraid I can't go. Oh! you have one of KYLIE'S BUGGIES? Well, I shall certainly go.



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75c, for 65c; re New Silk Colla ed and black, B Ladies' Cotto witgout sleeves. reg. 15c, for 124

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